

## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

### NOTICE

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**TO:** All Department Personnel

**FROM:** Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE FOR OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT AND PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

**Purpose.** The purpose of this Notice is to inform Department personnel of the required procedures for establishing and maintaining an official Department social media account and to remind personnel of their obligation to adhere to Department policies and standards of conduct when using social media platforms for official business or personal use.

**Background.** Social media accounts are forms of electronic communication (such as online services for social networking, blogging, or disseminating content) where users form online communities share information, ideas, messages, and digital content such as video and audio recordings. Social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat and many other online services that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking.

Social media is a powerful tool through which the LAPD can disseminate important information to the community, listen to voices and perceptions of the Department, connect directly with our community members online, and build public trust. Social networks and other online media are excellent tools for engagement and two-way communication, but inappropriate use may undermine the public's faith and trust in the Department and its mission. Accordingly, this Notice serves as an important reminder that existing Department policies, procedures, and standards of conduct are applicable to all Department personnel when using social media platforms for professional or personal use. In addition, this Notice provides new procedures for opening and maintaining a social media account to conduct official Department business.

### OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

An official Department social media account is defined as an account on a social media platform that is managed by a Department employee and which represents the Los Angeles Police Department through the use of logos, badges, or written content.

Official Department social media accounts may be used for official business such as:

- Disseminating public safety bulletins, messages, and other authorized official information;
- Providing crime prevention and emergency preparedness tips;
- Promoting Department-sanctioned events;
- Promoting recruitment efforts;
- Seeking assistance for criminal investigations; and,
- Promoting two-way communication and outreach with community members on issues relevant to the official business of the Department.

**Establishing an Official Department Social Media Account.** All Department employees or entities seeking to establish an official Department social media account (e.g., geographic Area offices, specialized units, senior lead officers, and youth programs officers) shall forward an Intradepartmental Correspondence, Form 15.02.00, to the Department's Public Information Director (PID), that includes the following information:

- A description of the platform to be used (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or another social media service);
- The account's username and handle (if applicable);
- The account's password;
- The names and serial numbers of employees authorized to manage or post information on behalf of the Department; and,
- A concise narrative setting forth the purpose of the account and how the account will promote the Department's mission and serve the community.

The PID shall review the Intradepartmental Correspondence and determine whether the account promotes the best interests of the Department. If approved, the PID will notify the employee or entity via Department email or other official correspondence.

**Existing Official Department Social Media Accounts.** Account holders for official Department social media accounts in existence on the date of this Notice, shall complete an Intradepartmental Correspondence as set forth above for approval by the PID.

**Command Staff Exception:** Captains or above, and civilian-equivalents, are not required to obtain approval to establish a social media account representing their official position or Department command. However, Captains or above and civilian-equivalent command staff

are required to complete an Intradepartmental Correspondence notifying the PID of the establishment or maintenance of an official Department social media account. The Form 15.02.00 shall set forth:

- The platform being used (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or another social media service);
- The account's username and handle (if applicable);
- The account's password;
- The names and serial numbers of employees authorized to manage or post information on behalf of the Department; and,
- The purpose of the account and how the account promotes the Department's mission and serves the community.

**Change of Authorized User for Official Department Social Media Accounts.** If an account holder makes administrative modifications such as changing the account name, handle, authorized users, or other features, the account holder shall notify the PID via an Intradepartmental Correspondence as soon as practicable.

**Passwords and Security.** The integrity and security of official Department social media accounts is critical to preventing unauthorized use or the unauthorized disabling of an account. Employees should use strong passwords and two-factor authentication security features when available. Employees should also store the password to any official Department social media account in a safe location and not share it with any unauthorized users.

**Blocking.** Employees using an official Department social media account generally should not block or mute users or followers unless failure to do so impacts public or officer safety. Absent exigent circumstances, personnel shall first consult with the PID for direction prior to blocking or muting a user participating in an official Department social media account.

Employees should also report violations of the terms and conditions of any social media platform by a user or follower to the appropriate social media platform.

**Email Addresses.** Official Department Social Media Accounts shall be registered to a Department email address.

**Posting of Content – Investigations and Officer Safety.** Personnel shall not post to social media platforms, information that would compromise an on-going investigation or compromise officer safety by revealing ongoing or future tactical operations or disclosing confidential tactics

or techniques. In addition, official Department social media accounts shall not be used to post photographs of arrestees (including booking photos), victims, or witnesses except for approved investigative purposes or with the person's consent.

**Posting of Content – Official Department Positions.** Statements on issues of public importance posted to official Department social media accounts are official representations of the Los Angeles Police Department. Therefore, personnel shall only post statements or other content which is consistent with official Department positions or otherwise authorized by appropriate Department authorities.

**Posting of Content – Political Positions, Endorsements, or the Promotion of Commercial Products.** Personnel are prohibited from political activity or endorsing commercial products or services in violation of City ethics prohibitions, Department policies and the standards of conduct applicable to Department employees.

## **PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS**

Los Angeles Police Department personnel are permitted to use social media platforms as private individuals consistent with Department policies and the standards of conduct for off-duty behavior.

Personnel may use publicly-available LAPD insignia (including badges, logos and seals), photographs, and video content that do not violate Department policies by their public release, and information identifying the user as an LAPD employee, on personal social media accounts.<sup>1</sup> Personnel, however, are cautioned that identifying oneself as a Department employee or using LAPD insignia or graphics may: (1) suggest that the views expressed on the platform are positions endorsed by the Department; and/or, (2) create the appearance that the account holder is acting in an official capacity.

*Accordingly, Department personnel should be mindful that a personal social media account that contains LAPD-related graphics, photographs or identifying information may create a nexus to the Department and subject the employee to the policies and restrictions applicable to on-duty contact and conducting official Department business.*

**Inapplicability to Undercover or Other Approved Investigative Uses.** This Notice does not apply to the use of social media accounts for undercover activities or other approved

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<sup>1</sup> The Los Angeles Police Department, however, maintains its rights and exclusive use of its registered trademarks.

investigative purposes.

**References.** The following documents contain additional information regarding social media procedures and responsibilities:

- Department Manual Section(s) 1/210; 1/210.35; 1/270.20; 1/270.25; 1/330; 3/405; 3/406.10 and 3/788.40.
- Operations Notice No.12: *Posting or Publishing of Advertisement for Department-Sponsored Events*, dated October 16, 2008.
- Legal Bulletin Volume 32, Issue 1: *Limitations on a Police Officer's First Amendment Right to Freedom of Expression*, dated February 27, 2008.
- *Los Angeles Police Department Social Media User Guide. 2015.*

Any questions regarding this Notice may be directed to the Public Communications Group, at (213) 486-5900.



MICHEL R. MOORE  
Chief of Police

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